
POST-WAR MISSIONS

- a fresh challenge



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As preliminary to any satisfactory discussion of post-war missions, we need to recall to mind the world missionary situation at the outbreak of the war, and also to take note of the war's effect to date upon missions.

The outbreak of the present world war saw the missionary enterprise at the most advanced stage it had ever reached. The goal of the church's God-given task of carrying the Gospel to the whole world, while still a considerable distance off, was nearer and more clearly in view than ever before. Among contributory factors to this hopeful situation and outlook may be mentioned: (1) the cumulative effect of past missionary efforts, (2) the very wide expansion of the field and work of missions, (3) the great increase in the translation and circulation of the Scriptures, and (4) the steady development of indigenous churches and leadership. Thus when the present war began the missionary movement had reached its very zenith of opportunity, advance, and achievement for all time.

The present war's effect upon missionary work and interests has unquestionably been greater far than that of any previous war in history. It has meant the cutting off of all European missionaries from their home bases; the diversion of men and money to the fighting forces; the disruption of transportation to and from the fields; the turning of many

mission areas into battlefields; the enormous destruction of mission property; the interning of hundreds of missionaries and putting other hundreds to perilous flight; the subjection of workers in still open fields to no little hardship from insufficient food; uncontrolled banditry, outrageous rise in living costs due to currency inflation, and many other problems.

This makes a very dark picture and may seem like the triumph of the enemy. But there is another and a brighter side which quite out-balances it. God has answered the prayers of His people, has made the wrath of man to praise Him, and has turned weapons formed against His cause into means for promoting it. Reports come of a wonderful revival and development of indigenous churches in Ethiopia during the enforced absence of the missionaries. The story of God's mighty working in China during the war years is a thrilling epic. The ministry of the missionaries to Chinese war sufferers has newly commended Christianity to the masses. Multitudes of destitute refugees have been brought under the sound of the Gospel. The migration of millions from the coastal provinces to the far west has greatly extended the Gospel witness. The suffering Christians in occupied China have grown in grace, while the influx of many mature Christians to the west has brought new life to the smaller and feebler churches there. Conversions in all China during the war years have been the greatest ever.

Similar favorable features in other mission fields could be cited. Thus the Adversary's

greatest efforts to frustrate the work of missions by means of this war have signally failed, and from the highest point of view there has been gain instead of loss.

Encouraging signs of growing missionary concern at the home end are also to be noted, such as the steadily increasing number of missionary conferences and prayer groups, and even of missionary giving despite the serious losses and new demands entailed by the war.

Coming now to the direct consideration of post-war missions, let us note some of the salient factors to be reckoned with when the long-prayed-for end of the war comes, and the door swings open for resumption of full missionary activity.

I. FAVORING FACTORS

1. Better opportunities than ever before of reaching and influencing the peoples of most mission lands will confront us because of the new favor missionaries have won by their splendid ministry to the temporal and spiritual needs of those peoples during the war. This ministry has called forth warmest expression of gratitude and has raised missionary prestige to a new level. Moreover, the sufferings and losses of the war period have had a chastening effect and made hearts more susceptible to the Gospel message.

A remarkable change in this respect has come over even the educated class in China. Hitherto proud, materialistic and anti-foreign, they are now seeking friendly relations with the missionaries and showing a genuine spirit

of inquiry into Christian truth. In Latin America a similar increased respect for the evangelical missionary and an open mindedness to his message are in evidence. Strong expressions of dissent from the claim of the Roman Catholic hierarchy that the presence and work of Protestants are universally resented have been made publicly by not a few statesmen and educators in the southern Republics.

Of vital significance also is the fact that the supreme rulers and other high officers of State in several mission lands are confessed Christians and openly sympathetic with missionary work. Among well known examples are Generalissimo Chiang of China and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia.

2. The phenomenal advance in means of transportation and increase of material facilities of every kind constitute a factor of tremendous value. New railroads and motor highways have been constructed in all parts of the world. God has even used the bitter enemies of His missionary cause to contribute unwittingly to it, as in the case of the building by the Italians of a military road in Ethiopia which has reduced the journey to a southern section of the field there from forty-one days to three, and the instance of a road cut by the Japanese military through the impenetrable jungle of Malaya.

Still more revolutionary is the multiplication of airways, so that it has actually been predicted that soon no point on the globe will take over forty-eight hours to reach by air. Millions upon millions of dollars have thus been spent by

Governments in roads, bridges, and airways the world over. Think of the important bearing of all this upon future missionary operations and interests. And then in addition, thousands of trucks, jeeps, hospital cars and other motor vehicles, and millions of dollars' worth of medicines, surgical instruments, and hospital equipment, besides radios, telephones, etc., etc., have been transported to these distant lands, the bulk of all of it very likely to be left there and to become available for missionaries' use.

3. The steady trend toward unification of languages is another feature of advantage. It is stated that in Africa a gradual change is in process, accelerated by the war, from tribal to trade languages, by which that continent's 557 tribal languages will sooner or later be largely supplanted by four trade tongues, with seventy per cent of the people speaking some one of the four. The various languages and dialects of China are likewise in process of being simplified and unified.

4. Still another post-war adjunct to missions is the radio. The well-known and powerful Voice of The Andes (HCJB) station in Quito, Ecuador, daily broadcasts the Gospel in several languages. Until interrupted by the war, a radio station in Shanghai had been conducting a similar program, and had plans to establish a branch station in each of China's provinces. And now an Association entitled National Religious Broadcasters has been formed and is investigating the practicality of setting up broadcasting centers at

strategic points throughout the missionary world. The scope and effect of such new auxiliary missionary method can hardly be over-estimated.

II. OPPOSING FACTORS

It is not to be thought for a moment that with the reopening of the door for world-wide missionary effort the opposition of Satan will have ceased. Rather may we be certain that it will increase, and the devil is doubtless even now mustering his forces for a new and vigorous assault upon the forces of Christ. There will be commercialism with its tendency to turn hearts away from the quest after spiritual things by the counter-attractions of money and worldly pleasure. There will be a tremendous new flood of "civilized" vices pouring into the open doors—rum, narcotics, gambling, harlotry, lewd picture shows and other evils, as well as every form of false and corrupted religion and philosophy. There will be the baneful influence of the new and intimate contact of Orientals and Africans with Western soldiery and its shameful display of loose morals. All these things together will be a powerful force competing hotly with Christianity for the mind and heart of the newly awakened peoples of mission lands. Communism, too, is sure again to raise its ugly head in the Far East as another grave menace, while Romanism is likely to put up a new fight for the exclusion of evangelicals from Latin America and other priest-ridden lands, and, it is to be feared, with the connivance of nominally Christian

governments which for political reasons are disposed to play into the hands of the Papacy behind the subtle guise of the "good neighbor" policy.

These factors, both the favoring and the opposing ones, present a tremendous challenge to the missionary forces and to the home church that stands behind them. And it is a challenge which must be met with utmost promptness and vigor. Anything less than full preparedness, or any delay in putting the called-for new plans and measures into action will mean inevitable setback and irrecoverable loss. Satan must not be allowed to outwit and outdo the Lord's forces and get the start on them, but the hosts of the Lord must be the first to seize the advantage and turn it to achievement.

1. Missions on the field should be restudying the areas for which they are responsible, laying plans for the development of work already in hand and for advance into new territory, deciding on strategic points to occupy, and particular classes calling for more attention. Policies and methods should be re-examined, and revised if necessary in the interest of highest efficiency. Societies laboring in the same areas or adjacent fields should confer with a view to eliminating any overlapping of work and co-operating to the fullest possible extent.

2. The vital importance of the indigenous church can hardly be overstressed. Everything possible should be done for its spiritual development and its fuller functioning, and it

should be made a real partner in all forward looking field plans and programs. In a number of major fields indeed, including all those of East Asia, the church has already become or is rapidly becoming the senior partner, with the missionary body supplementing rather than any longer controlling operations.

3. The greatest concern and first consideration, both to the missionary forces in the field and to the administrative agencies at home, should be the still remaining unoccupied areas, whether in countries already entered or in those yet wholly untouched. No difficulties or barriers should be allowed to deter or postpone definite plans for reaching all such areas. These pioneer advances should, if at all possible, be undertaken by existing Societies, with the great advantage which their experience, equipment, and leadership give them, rather than by the creation of new agencies headed by inexperienced and untried leaders, and involving new machinery and other duplication of expense. The vital need in this late hour is not for new Societies, but rather for the reinforcing of such existing ones as remain sound in the faith and have proved their efficiency and fruitfulness.

4. Turning our thought now to home responsibilities, we face the consideration of the support of post-war missions with men, money, and prayer. The sadly depleted and utterly inadequate missionary forces must be promptly increased, first by the return of the many experienced workers detained at home by the war, and then by substantial new reinforce-

ments. Plans for these latter should already be well under way in the form of public appeal, training courses for recruits, selection and cultivation of candidates by mission boards, and testing out of prospective new workers in active service at home.

What kind of new recruits are wanted? The very best in every respect! Higher qualifications than ever before are demanded to meet the coming situation. It is not rank and file workers that will be needed, for these are furnished from the churches on the field. Every new worker sent out needs to be a leader in some line, able to make a distinct contribution to the life and work of the growing and expanding native churches.

Men of rugged physical and spiritual mold are needed for pioneering in frontier areas; men of outstanding evangelistic gift for city campaigns and country tours; men and women with special gifts and training for child evangelism, work among students, officials, and other special classes; doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and technicians of the highest calibre for medical work; and perhaps most of all, men and women qualified for systematic Bible teaching in the churches and the training of native workers in Bible schools and seminaries.

But along with such liberal gifts and training, these new recruits must be truly humble and spiritual, free from every trace of personal or national "superiority complex," ready not only to co-operate with national workers and churches but even to work under their direction in some cases. To such new recruits the

mission fields of today offer a life investment unsurpassed anywhere in its splendid opportunities of service to mankind, and in its highest satisfaction and reward to the workers themselves.

It goes without saying that for the reinforcement of the missionary ranks and the forward movement on all fields a proportionate increase of support by money and prayer at home will be absolutely necessary. Missionary advance abroad is precisely as dependent upon home co-operation as is military advance, and we have all become familiar with the daily reiterated appeals for more munitions and for money to produce and send them to the front.

Is the church at home going to respond and measure up to this new challenge or need and opportunity? Of one thing I feel certain: only a mighty Holy Spirit revival in the hearts of God's true children, deepening their own experience of Christ's great salvation, imparting a fresh vision and conviction of the desperate need of a lost world for the Gospel, and bringing a complete surrender of life and resources to the Lord for the carrying out of His Great Commission can make possible the forward movement in missions for which I believe God is giving His Church one last opportunity at the end of this war.

Are there any indications of such a revival? I believe there are. I see them in the ringing testimony and soul-winning efforts of such movements as the Christian Business Men, Gideons, Youth Rallies, Pocket Testament League, Child Evangelism Fellowship, Victory

Centers for service - men, the many Gospel radio broadcasts, and other forms of aggressive evangelism. Through these various channels several tens of thousands of conversions weekly are reported. I believe that in all this, and notwithstanding the prevalent doctrinal apostasy and spiritual coldness, we can detect at least the first droppings of the gracious showers of blessing so needed and prayed for.

But we must pray on, until the greater outpouring comes upon the true Church of Christ, which thus revived and filled with the Spirit of God will rise and give itself with new energy and devotion to carrying out to a finish the long-delayed task of the world's complete evangelization.

Our day presents a momentous crisis in world-wide missions. Tremendous issues are at stake, for time and for eternity. The Church of Christ faces its mightiest challenge of the age. To accept this challenge will lead to glorious victory; to reject it will mean ignominious defeat. What shall the answer be?

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